

THE LAST ONLY A GENERATION—The work of the famous ones of the past. The visit of a French tragedian Mount-Sully in New York once.

Perhaps it is in the reading of theatrical history that one learns to doubt the importance of the actor's art. So little of it ever remains to posterity. Records of the triumphs of the giants of the past are impressions of the reader the impossibility of any repetition of these brilliant careers. Audiences of the present day are indifferent when they are not positively opposed to any such exhibitions of the art of the actor. Identical repetition of anything so fine are unknown to the present day. The same material is not possible now. Barring the Shakespeare repertoire, there are no dramas of the earlier period which could be made acceptable today.

So there is a certain discouragement in reading about the splendors of the elder actors acting as *Sir Giles Overreach* in "The Iron Chest" or the irrepressible union of William T. Burton's embodiment of *Micaver* or *Cap. Cuttle*. Laura Keane's infinite variety of expression as the heroine of "The Sea of Ice" is something one might have liked to see and enjoy, although it seems far enough away now to lack any interest. Nor does the actor accomplished with *Lady Gay Spenser* avail to bring us any closer to the art and her personality than the rest of her repertoire. It is only when we see a notable actor of the past is described to us in one of the characters of Shakespeare that we are at once able to compare him mentally with some of the great of our own day.

The actor's art suffers from the disadvantage of its constantly changing medium. There are few classics that survive all the varieties of taste and fashion. On our own stage to-day they are practically limited to "She Stoops to Conquer," "The Rivals"—how rarely, moreover do we see these nowadays—"The School for Scandal" and the Shakespearean theatre. No other art is confined so strictly in the manner of its manifestation. What is great in the plastic arts has approximately the same value for one generation that it had for another. But a score of years states most of the means by which the actor may exhibit the best of his powers. Perhaps more in this attribute than any other lies the ground for estimating as lightly as some of his judges do the artistic value of what the actor contributes to his age.

But not only our generation suffers from this inability to measure the past by the terms of the present. It will be difficult for future ages to form any estimate of what our actors accomplished, for instance, if they are to be described by the roles they are playing to-day. It will be of course easy to recall Julia Marlowe by her classic heroines and it is probable that none of them in the years to come will be superior to what our foremost actor-to-day has to offer. Modjeska is remembered by her acting in the plays of Shakespeare and Schiller, but there are few women of the present generation who have been seen in anything but contemporary dramas quite as ephemeral as those which were popular half a century and less ago. Undoubtedly the plays of our day are written with greater technical precision and smoothness. They are more in accordance with the laws of life and they are generally more polished, but they are not destined to live any longer.

Suppose, for instance, one wanted to describe to future generations the finish and ease of John Drew's acting, its naturalness, well bred humor and distinction of style, would "Smith" be the best medium of its display, or what in the long list of English dramas that he so valiantly offers year after year will suggest anything to readers two score years from now? It has been so long since he acted anything approaching a classic character as to feel that one of these from his earlier repertoire would not properly be a fair estimate of his methods during the later years of his career. So there is not a figure in his gallery that one might select as typical of his art to future generations of readers.

The same has been true of all recent generations. But once there existed for every actor certain conventional standards. These were roles which were held up as criticisms of his art. By his success in them was he known to his own and later generations. Such a period ended with the beginning of the middle years of the last century and the actors of the Victorian era were no more fortunate so far as they were leaving monuments of their art for the future. But so long as the art of the player, unlike any other, accomplishes its result immediately and is in reality intended only for the enjoyment of the immediate spectator, what posterity may learn of it is not so important after.

Jean Mounet-Sully has just acted in "Alceste" for the last time at the Theatre Francaise. This foretells the departure of the great tragedian who has for many years dominated the theatre repertoire of the House of Moliere. Gradually he will act the roles with which his name has been associated before retirement into the ease of the older veterans of the historic theatre who are enjoying their pensions, whether they need them or not.

Mounet-Sully is one of the few actors of the Comedie who has appeared in this country. Had his experience been happier perhaps there might have been more of him brought to the New York stage.

The tragedian's fate here was particularly mortifying. He came under the management of Abbey & Grau to act at the Abbey Theatre, now the Knickerbocker, which had been built with the purpose of housing foreign celebrities. In pursuance of his theory that Americans might ultimately be induced to listen to French players Maurice Grau organized a capable company for this country and started over with the greatest of French actors at its head.

He acted in "Hernani," then in "Antigone" and "Le Cid," in "Ruy Blas" and "Hamlet." The classics of the French stage alternated with the best that the romantics had written, and there was something represented by "Hamlet," which the actor has just expressed the intention of making his last public appearance when he shall have decided that the time has come. Then in the French version of Sophocles' "Edipus Rex" he received an unexpected and altogether impressive ovation of his talents. Mounet-Sully had been acting of the great genius that did not seem fully deserved.

In other plays he had all the faults

of the French tragedian. His redundant temperament kept him weeping, sighing and singing, as all actors of his school do, throughout the verses of the Hugo plays. They changed them now at the Comedie Francaise, but no other actor here had ever intoned his way through five acts of tragedy until the night of the early spring of 1904 when Mounet-Sully revealed this peculiarity of his national style to an American audience. His acting of "Ruy Blas" was a much like his first performance. He was graceful, handsome, of uncommonly well proportioned athletic figure and his poses were picturesque. But everything that he did was touched by the exaggeration of his southern temperament. This was not of course the reason for his failure here. Nobody ever knew whether or not the actor was good or bad because nobody went to see him.

It remained for his performance of *Edipe* to reveal the talents of Mounet-Sully at his best. He moved through the stately tragedy with the self-conscious beauty and classic perfection of a Hellenic statue. Even the expression of the desperate horror of the last scene was touched with none of the excess of gesture and the eccentricities of voice which he revealed in the French romantic dramas. Yet his playing of the Greek lacked no element of vitality and was much more natural than the sighing, moaning, bellowing, weeping valets and outlaws that were so much more characteristic of his own country. There was reserve both in his *Oreste* and *Cid*, but *Edipe* were taken as the measure of his genius he would always rank high in his age.

There was nothing so astonishing about his *Hamlet* as the fact that he played the unhappy Prince with aspects of the play were not good rimmed nor even of a modish tortoise shell. They were indeed all but invisible. Only the actors with him and a few very observant spectators in the first rows even knew that he had them on. He had long been troubled with a cataract and was once threatened with blindness. The darkness of the stage through so much of Shakespeare's tragedy made him fearful of attempting to act without some aid to his sight, so small rimless glasses partly concealed under his long hair helped him through the play.

The clarification of the actor at his failure here was keen. He thought that the romantic plays of his repertoire as well as his appearance in Shakespeare and in the classic Greek tragedy must be familiar to cultivated theatregoers in this country would awaken interest in his presence. Even his own countrymen kept away from him except when there were free tickets to be had. But the French colony only goes to the opera once a year and to the theatre never. So Mounet-Sully, Eugene Segond-Weber, who is now at the Comedie Francaise and possessed every qualification for that honor except the note of distinction when she was here in 1894, the beautiful scenery of "Edipe Roi," which realized even the graces of Hellenic line and color and the rest of the classics of Corneille and Racine, were powerless to create the least interest in the most noted actor of France. Probably the most noted actor of the stage in this country no such story of the disaster that overtook a famous actor from any other country as this failure of Mounet-Sully. But as events proved, other cities were no more cordial, and when he sailed for France it was with the mortification of having failed to arouse the interest of the public anywhere in this country.

AN EAGLE'S FATE.

The Million to One Chance by Which It Lost Its Life.

George S. Reid in Country Side Monthly.

It was 11:30 o'clock on a hot, bright morning. Not a breeze moved to cool the perspiring Kaffirs who labored in the mine high up on the hillside, only the tap of the hammer or the rattle of loaded trucks broke the silence. High above the mine, a mere speck against the blue sky, soared a mere "lamfanner" or lamb catcher, a species of eagle which is most destructive to the young flocks of sheep and goats, measuring in some cases six feet from tip to tip of its extended wings. Suddenly the record of the eagle far off over the next hill, and so swift is the flight or swoop of these birds that the eye can hardly follow them. Lighting the fuses one by one with a practiced hand, the over-seer made a run for shelter from the flying stones and pieces of rock that must follow the explosion.

As he did so the sky was darkened for an instant, and the eagle once again swooped over the mine, paused, and again came gliding down at a pace that seemed to the watching men quicker than light. Just at the second when the great bird was over the explosive in its rapid glide the first charge of dynamite went off. For a space of half a minute nothing could be seen but dense clouds of smoke and dust and the faint light of the explosion. The cleared the over-seer was both pleased and astonished to see the body of the eagle lying a few yards off on a ledge of rock.

Surely a miracle had happened, for, as the over-seer himself said when displaying the body of his mate later in the day, it was the only eagle that had ever been seen to obtain a set of claws or talons of its own in question, but had so far failed to do so. As he was preparing to blast some dozen holes charged with dynamite the bird again swooped down and passed so close above his head that he felt a rush of air caused by the eagle far off over the next hill, and so swift is the flight or swoop of these birds that the eye can hardly follow them. Lighting the fuses one by one with a practiced hand, the over-seer made a run for shelter from the flying stones and pieces of rock that must follow the explosion.

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Delights of the Famous Sopranos of the World. "Carmen" is singing the role of Carmen. Emma Bellotti's Retirement—Scheidtmann also to quit.

Nellie Melba has started for Australia, where her opera company is to sing next winter. Lilli Lehmann has gone to the Salzammergut and will remain there until October. She will organize no Mozart festival this summer owing to the financial loss of the experiment last season. Geraldine Farrar will appear as the *Goose Girl* when Humperdinck's "Königskinder" is sung to open the Royal Opera House in Berlin in September. Emmy Destinn, who has just sung *Valentine* in "Les Huguenots" in London, will appear for a few performances in Berlin this summer. Marcella Sembrich is at Lausanne and will spend next season in Lausanne. Mme. Edwina, the Canadian soprano, is again singing *Louise* in London. She has been the only representative of the part at Covent Garden.

Mary Garden has postponed her appearance at the Opera in Paris as *Salome* until the autumn. Frances Alda has been singing in the performances given in connection with the exposition in Rome. May Scheider, who is to be the coloratura soprano at Carlsruhe for the next five years, has just been appearing with great success at the Komische Oper in Berlin. Marcella Craft, the first soprano of the Royal Opera House in Munich, is on her way to this country for a vacation. Margaret Lemon, who made a successful appearance in Rome as *Nedda*, will remain in Italy for the winter. Maude Fay will next season add the dramatic soprano roles to her repertoire in the Munich Royal Opera House. Lina Cavalieri is to remain in London as prima donna of Oscar Hammerstein's new opera house during all of next winter.

Maggie Tevte, who was the second person to sing the role of *Milvande* and is the only successful pupil of Jean de Reszke, will sing *Viola* to the *Carmen* of Mary Garden next winter. Louise Grandjean, dramatic soprano of the Paris Opera, has been teaching a young soprano whom she discovered and who lately won a first prize at the Conservatoire in Paris. She has been singing in Stockholm. This appeared as *Carmen*. Esther Osborn, who has been for some years the dramatic soprano of the Stockholm Opera House, has retired to sing hereafter in Italy. She is an American and comes from Minneapolis. Lillian Grenville will sing next winter in Russia and in southern France.

Gianna Belloncin, who is to retire from the operatic stage in Berlin, has been singing for some years in the repertoire of the Berlin Opera. She was never a singer and lost her own voice before she was 30. It is surprising that she did not teach acting. For the last twenty years her acting has been the subject of her pupils and has been vocally, those to be expected of any so-called actress. Her acting of *Viola* was the most praised achievement, although at her first appearance in the role she had a conventional treatment of the principal scenes aroused severe criticism. She rejected all the old operatic business and modeled her representation on the method of Eleonora Duse. Her singing was the public came to accept her view, and her acting in all her other roles was highly praised. She was very popular in Berlin and her last appearance there was made as *Viola*, a part in which she had travelled through various cities during the last few years.

Her first appearance was at a small theatre in Naples, with her father was a member of the same company. She later went to Lisbon, where for the first time she appeared in a regular opera company. It was the uncertainty of her acting that made her progress difficult, and she confesses that this stood so much in her way that she once was on the point of leaving the stage. But she did not, but remained to sing among other roles, *Santa Lucia* in the first production of "Cavalleria Rusticana" and *Furridu* of Signor Signor. It was from her performance that *Viola* was made. She was a permanent member of the company. He sang in the repertoire of the German performances given by Polini in London and in the following season went to Dresden for a few performances. He was then engaged as a permanent member of the company. In 1904 he made his first appearance at Bayreuth and during the following year was heard for the first time in the repertoire of the Paris Opera. He will teach singing in Weimar and is one of the few German singers who is capable of singing in the repertoire of the Paris Opera. He remained in the Dresden company in response to the request of Ernst Schuch in order to take part in the original production of "Der Rosenkavalier" in a section of the company. He was to postpone his farewell from the stage, but would not remain longer than the close of the present season, as he desired to leave the stage and to devote his long while still in possession of his voice. He made his last appearance as *Hans Sachs*. His Bayreuth role was *Amfortas*. Jean Ritzke, the French barytone who made his first appearance in the Paris Opera, was first a tenor and reversed the popular proceedings by gradually taking up the barytone repertoire at the Paris Opera. He was first a tenor and reversed the popular proceedings by gradually taking up the barytone repertoire at the Paris Opera. He was first a tenor and reversed the popular proceedings by gradually taking up the barytone repertoire at the Paris Opera.

Margarete Preuss-Matzenauer, who is to come next winter to the Metropolitan Opera House, will not hereafter consider herself to be a French singer. She will essay mezzo-soprano roles and is said to have designs on the *Brünnhilde*. Eleonore de Ceneros has gone to Australia to sing in opera. Ernestine Schumann-Heink, who is in Germany, will sing both at the Bayreuth and the Munich Wagner festivals. Maria Gay is to sing in Russia next fall. She will appear as *Carmen*, *Dalia* and *Maddalena*, singing in the Russian tongue. Marie Brema will found a company in England. She will produce the production of revivals chiefly of the early operas. Kirkby-Lunn has been for the second season the *Dalla* at Covent Garden. Her mezzo-soprano roles and is said to have designs on the *Brünnhilde*. Eleonore de Ceneros has gone to Australia to sing in opera. Ernestine Schumann-Heink, who is in Germany, will sing both at the Bayreuth and the Munich Wagner festivals. 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